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Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7765th meeting
Wednesday, 31 August 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Ibrahim	(Malaysia)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed (*spoke in Arabic*): I am grateful for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the latest developments in the pursuit for peace in Yemen.

The past month has been tragic for Yemen. The departure from Kuwait without an agreement has betrayed the expectations of millions of Yemenis, who had hoped that the talks would bring an end to the conflict and open the way for Yemen's return to a peaceful and orderly transition. The end of the Kuwait talks was followed by a severe breakdown in the cessation of hostilities and a dangerous escalation in military activities. Extensive military confrontations have been on-going in recent weeks in Sana'a, Taiz, Al-Jawf, Shabwa and Mareb governorates, as well as along the border between Yemen and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The clashes have involved the use of artillery, airstrikes and ballistic missiles and have resulted in dozens of casualties, extensive destruction and renewed displacement.

As has been the case throughout the conflict, numerous violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law have accompanied the fighting. On 17 August, the Secretary-General noted with concern the continued escalation of hostilities in Yemen and along the border area, including airstrikes and ground fighting. He also condemned in the strongest terms the attack on a rural hospital in Hajjah.

According to human rights organizations, at least 60 members of the Baha'i community in Sana'a have been detained without charge, including six children. Further arrests were reportedly carried out on 16 August. That shows a worrying disrespect for the human rights of minority groups, and I echo the call from human rights groups for the immediate release of those still in detention. I also call on all the parties to fulfil their obligations and release all prisoners and detainees. I furthermore call upon all groups to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law to protect civilian lives and infrastructure.

The military escalation will continue to provide opportunities for the spread of terrorist groups. Al-Qaida and the Islamic State continue to wreak havoc in significant parts of Yemen. For example, a suicide attack in Aden killed or injured dozens of Yemenis on 29 August. That attack was strongly condemned. The Yemeni army's increasing ability to confront extremist groups, as evidenced by the recent detention of suspected militants from Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and the carrying out of military operations in Zinjibar and Hadramout, is encouraging. However, the absence of the State in many parts of Yemen, in addition to the chaos created by war, will continue to facilitate the expansion of those terrorist groups, which represents a real threat to the region.

The Kuwait talks concluded after more than three months of difficult negotiations. I would like to reiterate my gratitude to the Amir of Kuwait for hosting the talks and for his efforts to encourage the Yemeni parties to conclude an agreement. The talks in Kuwait did not yield an agreement, but they were not without important results. During the talks, the architecture of a road map emerged, which we will expand upon in the coming weeks. Before departing Kuwait, I agreed with both parties to continue consultations separately and to reconvene direct talks at a later stage.

Delaying progress towards an agreement is particularly dangerous considering the grave deterioration in the economic situation. Of particular concern are delays in the payment of salaries in many parts of the country. Without external support, the lack of revenue and the shortage of liquidity could make it impossible for salaries to be paid in the coming months. There are reports of civil servants unable to collect their wages in Aden and other parts of the south. The stoppage of salary payments risks driving many more Yemenis into destitution and vastly exacerbating the humanitarian situation. It will be necessary to find

practical solutions that will allow Yemen to overcome the liquidity crisis and ensure continued payments of salaries without discrimination everywhere in the country.

From a humanitarian perspective, the escalation in fighting has led to tragic and unnecessary civilian deaths, casualties and a worsening of humanitarian suffering. The number of internally displaced persons has risen to over 3 million. Food prices are on average at least 60 per cent above pre-crisis levels, while income levels have dropped dramatically. Despite the growing levels of need, it has become increasingly difficult for humanitarian agencies to access many areas. The health-care system and other basic social services are struggling to cope with an increased workload and fewer resources. The cessation of Yemenia flights to and from Sana'a has blocked access to Yemenis seeking urgent medical treatment abroad, thereby removing a much needed humanitarian lifeline. In that context, I welcome United States Secretary of State Kerry's announcement of an additional $189 million to the Yemen humanitarian response plan, which remains funded at only 28 per cent.

Over the past two weeks, I have conducted intensive meetings in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. In Riyadh, I met with President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour and Prime Minister Ahmed Obaid Mubarek Bin-Dagher, who reaffirmed their willingness to continue consultations on the basis of the principles agreed upon in Kuwait. During those visits, I also held extensive discussions with the Foreign Ministers and senior officials of Yemen, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, the Russian Federation, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States. The discussions reaffirmed the strong international and regional support for a settlement of the conflict in Yemen and a commitment to help overcome the desperate economic and humanitarian challenges facing the country.

During my latest visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, I briefed a joint meeting of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States that had been called specifically to discuss how to overcome obstacles in the peace process. That meeting was followed by a discussion with the Foreign Ministers of the member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), who emphasized their full support of the United Nations efforts in Yemen. In both encounters, there was strong support for a return to the cessation of hostilities, which began on 10 April. There was also consensus on the need for a full and comprehensive political solution involving clearly sequenced political and security measures and firmly grounded in the GCC initiative and its implementation mechanism, resolution 2216 (2015) and the National Dialogue Conference outcomes.

That proposed agreement would define a path for the rapid formation of a Government of national unity to be formed immediately following the withdrawal and handover of heavy weapons in Sana'a and some other vital areas. Implementation would be overseen by military and security committees made up of senior military professionals acceptable to both parties, who would assume responsibility for the security of the population, critical infrastructure and State institutions. The agreement would also provide for the immediate restoration of the functioning of State institutions, free from interference by revolutionary committees or other bodies created during the conflict.

The effective resumption of talks will be possible only if all parties maintain their commitment to a negotiated settlement and refrain from unilateral actions. I am extremely concerned by the announcement by Ansar Allah and former President, Ali Abdullah Saleh, of the formation of a supreme political council with broad administrative, security, economic and legislative powers. Those actions breach the commitments provided by both Ansar Allah and the General People's Congress to engage constructively in the peace process, as requested by the Security Council, and creates a new potential impediment to make progress towards an agreement. Unilateral actions of that sort will only complicate Yemen's path to peace and delay the end of military violence. We cannot effectively negotiate new political arrangements while unilateral steps are being taken that are inconsistent with a future comprehensive agreement. I therefore urge both parties to refrain from taking any additional unilateral steps that could undermine attempts to reach a peaceful settlement.

On the basis of international and regional support, I will resume consultations with the Government of Yemen, Ansar Allah and the General People's Congress in order to take advantage of this new initiative to and build on the progress made in Kuwait.

In order to accelerate progress along the path to renewed talks, the resumption of the cessation of

hostilities will be critical. Further military violence will not ease the way to a negotiated settlement. As we resume consultations, my priority will be to gain a recommitment from all sides to the cessation of hostilities. That should start with the full deployment of the De-escalation and Coordination Committee in Dharan Al-Janub. As specified in the terms and conditions agreed upon before the start of the Kuwait consultations, the cessation of hostilities should include a full end to all military activities by land, sea or air, using any kind of weapon. It should also include a complete de-escalation along Yemen's border with Saudi Arabia.

The recommitment to the cessation of hostilities will spare Yemen further loss of life, allow for an increase in the flow of humanitarian assistance and generate much-needed confidence for the negotiation of a comprehensive and peaceful solution. Only a negotiated political settlement can put an end to the devastation and injustice brought about by this horrific war. The Yemeni people have suffered for far too long, and understandably demand that Yemen's leaders demonstrate their commitment to the well-being of Yemen and the Yemeni people, and that they restore peace and security to their country without further delay.

Peace in Yemen is a priority, and the safety and security of all Yemenis should not be taken for granted. The United Nations has dedicated all of its political and administrative expertise to help Yemenis, but that will not be sufficient if the decision makers do not uphold their responsibilities and prioritize the interest of the population. The United Nations has not, and will not, fail Yemen. Yemen's leaders must not fail the Yemeni people — all the Yemeni people — in the south and in the morth.

The President: I thank Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Alyemany (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to express my sincere thanks to you, Sir, Ambassador Ramlan Bin Ibrahim, Permant Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations, for your leadership of the Security Council for the month of August and for this opportunity to address the Council. I would also like to express my gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his Special Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed, for the efforts that continue to be made since the end the of the latest round of talks in Kuwait in the ongoing efforts to reach a definitive peace and end the tragic war launched by the Houthi and pro-Saleh militias against our people in September 2014.

We had great hopes that today's briefing would be held against the backdrop of progress along the path to peace. We had hoped that the putchists would be aware of the tragedy of the situation in Yemen and that they would have agreed to the paper presented by the Special Envoy as the successful result of ongoing negotiations of over 100 days between the Government delegation and the putchists in neighbouring country of Kuwait. However, the pernicious Houthi and pro-Saleh militias have continued to wage war, kill innocent victims, expel civilians and blow up homes and houses of worship. They have continued to attack areas bordering Saudi Arabia, unleashing death and fuelling the terrorist gangs in Iraq through the regional proxy, Hizbullah. Those gangs took the State hostage back in September 2014. Without any form of legitimacy or legal basis, they have continued to destroy the homeland through their sectarian endeavour to gain legitimacy in promoting pro-Saleh factions and Houthis as representatives of the Yemeni people — a people who has fully rejected them and the family fiefdom of Saleh.

The Yemeni Government has unconditionally renewed its firm commitment to choose the path of peace in order to end the suffering of the valiant Yemeni people, who continue to face the consequences of the unjust war launched by the Houthi and pro-Saleh militias in all areas of Yemen. The Government believes that peace is the only way to rid the country of those criminal gangs and warlords. Since the very beginning, the Yemeni Government has responded positively to the efforts made by the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy for Yemen. The Government of Yemen continues to make the painful and difficult concessions for peace in the country, whereas the putchists have remained staunchly opposed to any peaceful solution. With regard to the people of Yemen's present and future fate, they have insisted on the status quo and the rule of gangs and militias.

While we stress the importance of the terms of reference in resolving the crisis in Yemen, the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the results of National Dialogue Consultations and the relevant Security Council resolutions on Yemen, namely resolution 2216 (2015), the putchists have

insisted on circumventing them —particularly in their latest unilateral statement, which buries those terms of reference because they do not serve their plans to lay hand on the State. The regional community as well as the international community have stressed that the solution to the Yemeni crisis cannot be a repetition of the Hizbullah model in Yemen and that the presence of statelets cannot be accepted within Yemen.

When the Kuwait talks collapsed following the rejection of the putchists to deal in a positive manner with the efforts of the Special Envoy and States encouraging the political process in Yemen, international efforts continued and resulted in ideas that emerged from the ministerial meetings of the Quartet in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia as well as other efforts on the part of the GCC, the United States and the United Kingdom, in cooperation and coordination with Russia and the participation of the Special Envoy. The Yemeni Government was among the first to embrace those ideas, whereas the putchists rejected them.

Those who are working towards peace have taken different stances with regard to dealing with militias whose slogan promotes death and who trade in death and destruction, introduce children to the theatre of war, are driven by sectarian expansionist ideas and call for increased international terrorism. The war could be ended today if the Yemeni people were allowed to overcome those criminal gangs, which have transformed their daily lives into a nightmare, and if Yemeni political forces were able to implement the results of the National Dialogue to rejoin humankind and implement the Sustainable Development Goals. Meanwhile, the Houthi and pro-Saleh gangs are destroying the little that we were able to build in Yemen with the assistance of Powers in the region and the world. At a time when the putchists continue raise the flags of death, we in the Yemeni Government continue our efforts to renew the hope of returning to a normal life in the areas in which the Government is present and of a democratic and federal State of Yemen in which everyone is a winner, living in peace and security with all our neighbours in the Gulf and the Arabian peninsula.

The people of Yemen are suffering because of the war launched by the Houthi and pro-Saleh militias on the Yemeni provinces. That suffering has reached inconceivable levels in connection with public health, education and various services. On a daily basis, violations of human rights and international humanitarian law are being committed. In response, the Government of Yemen is working around the clock to lessen the destructive consequences of the chaos created by the war launched by the militias against our people. Yemen's National Independent Commission has taken up the grave violations of human rights committed against our nation and people. We in the Government of Yemen call upon the international community and the friends of Yemen to stand with our people to confront this intransigeance and rejection on the part of the putchists, thereby enabling the Government to assume its responsibilities for rebuilding Yemen.

In conclusion, the Government of Yemen sincerely appreciates the tireless efforts made by the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy for Yemen. We also appreciate the efforts of the Council and the Ambassadors of the group of 18, which are aimed at achieving peace and stability in Yemen. We renew our deep appreciation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and all other members of the Arab coalition in contributing to regain legitimacy in Yemen. The Government of Yemen appeals to all members of the Security Council to continue their unified efforts, which have accompanied the crisis in Yemen since its onset in 2011. Because of the unified stand of the Security Council, much has been achieved in Yemen, which can be added to the outstanding record of the United Nations in the settlement of disputes throughout the world.

We call on the Security Council to take a firm stand vis-à-vis the putchists, who have shown their rejection of all the commitments required to achieve peace and continue daily to obstruct the resumption of the peace process led by the United Nations.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on this subject.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.